United Nations E/2006/NGO/21

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
11 May 2006

Original: English

Substantive session of 2006
Geneva, 3-28 July 2006
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by Hope for the Nations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100.

06-34654 (E) 050606

Statement

The following statements of conscience and mechanisms for implementation, as well as general recommendations, were adopted by the workshop. In addition, three NGOs presented their own, specific recommendations to be included.

1. Statements of Conscience

- Malevolent national, international and corporate labour practises that create immense human suffering and affect all workers, especially women and children (employed or not), must be addressed. Specifically, industrial activity harming the human environment, especially water supply, must be examined.
- Action must be taken against labour practises that are exploitative and exacerbate gender inequality and sexual exploitation of women and children, including, but not limited to diverse forms of slavery and bonded servitude.

2. Mechanisms for Change

- Employment issues, in both private and public sectors must be reviewed.
- Sustainable development must be achieved. Environmental damage created by industry must be effectively repaired through innovative measures, for example, turning polluted water into grey water or purer water.
- NGOs must collaborate, utilizing the expertise of each other to facilitate "grass roots" empowerment of people, making them aware of the existing laws to eliminate exploitation and malpractice.
- Community involvement must be encouraged, so initiatives, once started, continue after the initial funding is exhausted. Templates that are successful and transferable must be created.

3. General Recommendations

- Although the problems identified are immediate, a long-term solution must be found.
- The valuable, unpaid work of women must be acknowledged. The value of this work must be quantified. The creation of micro-enterprises that utilize skills women have, but do not receive pay for, must be sought.
- Both formal and practical education must be promoted.
- Ensure accountability and follow up of adequate government grants for development.
- The work of NGOs and civil society (coordinated and independent work) must be promoted.
- Emancipate and empower women.
- Encourage the provision of free primary education.
- Encourage partnerships among NGOs to permit NGOs to operate with more power and draw on each other's expertise.
- Encourage the development of agricultural practises that recognize and utilize local knowledge to help populations be more independent in sustainable food production.

- Create effective mechanisms for citizens to effect change in government policies and legislation.
- Promote youth representation at all levels of the United Nations.
- Raise awareness of the benefits, rather than the costs, of social programmes with the objective that such programmes are viewed as investments.
- Work to increase the capacity of current, income-generating practises and, if necessary, redirect activities for positive outcomes. For example, the substitution of opium cultivation for alternative crops.
- Encourage the appreciation of cultural diversity and expertise. Do not impose a Euro-centric understanding or practise on other groups.
- Seek to share knowledge and incorporate others people's ways of doing things. Attempt to maintain the "best" practises of each culture.

4. Specific Recommendations/Statements from Participants

Opportunity was provided for each group represented at the Workshop to submit specific recommendations, relevant to the topics addressed. Three organizations submitted statements/recommendations: The National Council of Women of Canada, the World Organization of Building Officials, and YWCA Canada.

The National Council of Women of Canada

It is imperative to restore and promote standard employment relations and restore proportional benefits. Uniform labour standards must be implemented across Canada, and contract work must be reduced.

World Organization of Building Officials

Prepared to work with all stakeholders to:

- improve the living conditions of the people of the world;
- provide model building, fire and all the other related codes;
- make recommendations to revise, modify or amend legislation and codes relating to building construction including safety in the built environment;
- provide education and training to the regulators;
- create and improve standards; and
- create standards for construction of buildings for that segment of the population that cannot afford to meet with the standards that are applicable and prevalent in the urban areas.

YWCA Canada suggested the following:

Women's Poverty:

- Social assistance rates in all jurisdictions must be raised to meet the poverty line (coherent regulated transfers in the CST)
- Pay/Employment equity legislation must be implemented
- EI reforms must be successfully implemented
- Social housing monies are applied in ways which benefit women

Violence against Women and Girls:

- A federal contribution of $50 million annually for women's crisis centres, shelters and transition homes

Civil Legal Aid and Court Challenges

- A federal transfer earmarked for civil legal aid and minimum national standards for services (as per the Canadian Bar Association Constitutional challenge)
- Expansion of the mandate of the Court Challenges Programme

Aboriginal Women

- The recognition of the full right of Aboriginal women to pass on Indian Status to their children and grandchildren, regardless of previous history of 'marrying out'
- The implementation of interim legislation that gives First Nations women matrimonial property rights equivalent to the rights of all other women in Canada. This legislation would eventually be replaced by new self-government legislation offering women protections
- Both interim legislation and future arrangements under self-government must be subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the equality sections. The use of the notwithstanding clause would be unacceptable.

Immigrant, Refugee and Migrant Women

- Remove all discrimination from the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
- Remove the live-in requirement from the Live-in Care-giver Program and facilitate immigration for these workers

Child Care

- A publicly funded system for quality child care parents can count on and afford. Government should provide most of the funding directly to programs, giving them a stable operating base. The balance of the cost will be paid for by a low user fee for parents. In Quebec, for example, parents pay a maximum $7 a day and government pays the rest.
- A Federal Child Care Act that guarantees standards and the principles of quality, universality, accessibility, developmental programming and inclusiveness. Similar to the Canada Health Act.
- Public accountability tied to provincial and territorial five-year plans containing goals, timelines, targets, and a way to measure real progress in developing comprehensive family and centre-based child care services.
- A system delivered and expanded in the not- for- profit sector with a transition plan developed for existing commercial operators.
- A public funding system that ensures that public funds go directly to services providers.

Women's Organizations

Restoration of core-funding so that equality-seeking women's organizations are properly supported.